



Anthroposophic News Sheet

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THE OPPOSITION TO SPIRITUAL SCIENCE.

LIES OF MODERN LIFE AND MASKED FACTS.

Lecture *) by Dr. RUDOLF STEINER, delivered at St. GALLLEN, Switzerland
on the 26th of October 1916.

Our spiritual-scientific literature already offers us an extensive and detailed material enabling us to gather knowledge concerning the various facts which can be brought down to-day from the supersensible worlds through spiritual-scientific research, and our Groups are now in a position to work with this material. When we come together, it would therefore be most helpful to discuss how this material is related to our soul-life, how we may introduce it into life itself, and how we ourselves may obtain through it refreshing, uplifting and strengthening forces. In short, on such occasions it would be a good thing to bear in mind above all the concerns of our spiritual movement, for its very nature entails that we should now meet less frequently.

Many of you will have noted that even to-day you still encounter numerous difficulties when you immerse yourselves in spiritual science or Anthroposophy. At first, the requirements of our soul lead us towards spiritual science, because the soul asks questions concerning the most important riddles of life. We find our way into spiritual science particularly when we observe modern life with everything that it can give us, and realise that the various spiritual directions, be they religious or scientific, are hardly able to give us truly satisfactory answers, in a deeper sense, to the great enigmatic problems of life.

When our thirst and longing for knowledge has thus led us into the spiritual-scientific movement, when we have immersed ourselves for a while in the truths which could so far be brought down from the spiritual worlds, then real difficulties, all kinds of difficulties frequently arise. These difficulties are of a different kind in every individual human being, so that it is not easy to

*) From stenographic notes unrevised by the lecturer.

describe them in a few words.

Our friends frequently say: "When I found my way into spiritual science, I found something extremely valuable and significant; yet in a certain way it has also isolated me, it has torn me out of the current views which I once shared with others, and life has, to a certain extent, become difficult for me." This is felt very keenly by those whose spiritual strivings are naturally dependent on the opinion of the world, and so forth. This really creates many difficulties.

Other friends speak of a frightened anxiety which appears when they have immersed themselves for a time in spiritual science; it is something that makes them feel afraid of many problems that begin to rise to the surface: for instance, the right way of facing life, etc. Many of you undoubtedly know these problems. Very often they are connected with the life of feeling.

In to-day's lecture I wish to discuss the difficulties connected with the inner life of the soul.

We do not always perceive the true connection of these feelings, which take on so many different aspects in every individual; frequently the true connections are not perceived in the right way. We should always bear in mind that those of our contemporaries who feel attracted by anthroposophical truths, still constitute a very small group of men. We live in the midst of the battle of life, which is being waged outside our circles with means that greatly contrast with ours. Those who reflect a little on what Anthroposophy really seeks in life, cannot fail to note how greatly the influence of anthroposophical ideas changes the aims of our thoughts, feelings and impulses of the will, and how much these aims differ from those pursued by the overwhelming majority of modern men. And since thoughts and feelings are real facts, we should also realise that our little number, or rather each one of us, forms part of a complex of forces that has not yet gathered much strength, and which must, in the majority of cases, confront the contrasting thoughts, feelings and views of the others. But though the difficulties which we must face in life take on so many different aspects, and though they do not immediately reveal the above-mentioned connections, it is nevertheless true that these connections exist.

Let us now ask the following question, placing it before our soul: How can we face the difficulties resulting through the fact that we are faithful and devoted adherents of Anthroposophy, so that we must come in conflict with the remainder of the world?

As stated, these things are hidden by a veil and they do not always reveal their true aspect. The healing remedy which we must, as it were, take into our souls through our own effort, so that we may develop within us an ever greater harmony, in spite of the opposition which we encounter in the external world, the healing remedies which our soul must take in, so that we may grow strong and able to face the discouragements and disharmonies which so frequently arise, these

healing remedies consist in a clear and true conception of the relation in which an adherer or sympathiser of Anthroposophy is placed in regard to the rest of humanity. It purifies our soul if clear and lucid thoughts are formed on this subject; ~~these~~ concepts purify the soul to such an extent that we can even be strong when contrasting powers from outside oppress us.

If our thoughts remain within a narrow horizon, we might say: "What is the use of envisaging the facts that divide Anthroposophy from the rest of the world! This does not in any way change my conditions of life!" - But this is wrong, for clear thoughts full of insight may not change the conditions of life from one day to the other, yet the strength acquired through such clear thoughts, in the direction indicated above, these clear thoughts in themselves, gradually give us so much strength that they are indeed able to change our life-conditions. Perhaps we are not yet able to develop thoughts that are really lucid and clear, so that they still lack the required strength.

In connection with what we wish to attain through spiritual science or Anthroposophy - not for our own sake, but for the sake of the world (and this is one of the clear thoughts which we should bear in mind) - we should realise that the civilised men of to-day live in a terrible, more or less conscious or unconscious lie, which has a tremendous effect on modern humanity. I am now voicing a most important truth, so let me throw more light on this particular point.

You see, if we really think and if we contemplate all that exists to-day in the so-called civilised world in the form of general culture, we cannot fail to realise that there are many things lacking in modern culture, that it lacks above all real life-impulses. Yet our modern culture is full of extravagant ideals. How many ideals, as they are generally called, rise up in the present time! How many associations and leagues are founded, with all kinds of aims and with programmes seeking to realise this or that ideal! This is being done with the best possible intentions, so that we can say: Men belonging to every sphere and class of life, who are impelled by this or that ideal to join small or large associations, are guided, from their own particular standpoint, by the best motive, and they really deserve our full respect. Yet these men generally live under the restraining influence of a certain timidity, which remains unconscious because it is timid; particularly in regard to the most important things now needed by humanity, these men live under a restraint which comes from an unconscious spiritual cowardice. What humanity now needs is spiritual knowledge, and the introduction of certain spiritual truths into life.

This was an important problem, particularly in the 19th century. You know, of course, that there are spiritual laws, laws pertaining to the spiritual worlds. This was always known to certain men, and also in the 19th century, when spiritual science in its present form did not yet exist, there were so-called occult societies,

more or less worthy of that name, which cultivated occult truths, spiritual truths, in many different ways. They also possessed a certain insight into the significance of spiritual truths for the world as a whole.

Towards the middle of the 19th century, a crisis arose in connection with the deepest impulses pertaining to the more recent development of mankind. This crisis consisted therein that materialism began to predominate in every sphere of life, in the fields of knowledge and in the fields of practical life. A high tide of materialism set in. We know that at that time many people wished to establish an encompassing world-conception based on natural-scientific materialism. This theoretical form of materialism would not have been so bad; the practical form of materialism was the worst evil. The materialism which penetrated into the ethical and social spheres of life, into man's religious feelings, was the one which led to a crisis in the course of the 19th century.

From the middle of the 19th century onwards, the men belonging to the above-named occult societies more or less worthy of that name, men who still knew something, began to concentrate their efforts on the best means of redressing the evil effects of the quickly spreading materialism. Certain circles possessing a certain spiritual-scientific insight, but not that insight which is the only effective one and which we endeavour in all modesty to reach, men belonging to circles which still possessed a traditional or some other obsolete spiritual-scientific insight into the evolution of humanity, asked themselves: How can we redress the evil which threatens modern humanity through materialism? And they said to themselves: We can redress it if we prove to men that there are not only physical phenomena in our environment, but also spiritual phenomena and beings. Let me add that these men were only accustomed to an experimental way of thinking, to external experiences and perceptions. And so these men who, as explained above, possessed a certain spiritual-scientific insight and who were so much concerned about the development of humanity, discovered no other solution than that of proving the existence of the spiritual world in the same way in which one proves the natural phenomena of the external, sensory world.

They tried all manner of things. And in the course of the 19th century, certain movements arose with the aim of convincing men that a spiritual world really exists. The coarsest, I might say, of these movements is the Spiritistic Movement. Whereas scientists experience difficulty in penetrating into the methods of spiritual science, which are relatively easy to understand, some really brilliant scientists of the 19th century really dealt quite earnestly with spiritism. *)

A peculiarity of spiritistic methods is to exercise an influence through experiments which the senses can perceive just as if they were chemical or physical experiments. These methods, seeking to

*) See "THE HISTORY OF SPIRITISM", recently publ. in German by the Phil. Anthropol. Publ. Co. in Dornach, Switzerland

imitate the natural-scientific methods, are already bankrupt to a great extent, and it will be more and more evident that they must become bankrupt, for it is of course impossible - metaphorically - to touch the spirit with one's hands. Spiritual-scientific research has been greatly discredited, and not furthered, by many things which were done in the 19th century, through the mysterious machinations of certain so-called occult societies.

It is clear that much remains to be done, both in the present and in the future, by men who are guided by the best motives, and who possess an insight into the needs of social life and of practical life. Yet we see that just those who possess such an insight are struck with sudden fright when they hear that the most significant impulses which are needed in the present and in the near future must come from a real knowledge of the spirit, from an insight into the truth that spiritual forces and spiritual beings live in our environment, which are just as real as the physical facts and physical beings. The best-intentioned men, who are really concerned about the progress of humanity, are quite scared when they hear this.

Let me now give you an example, for examples dealing with the most important facts of life are the most instructive. If we observe a great movement, it clearly reveals to us obstacles which every one of us also encounters on a small scale.

You see, a very important man, who was really moved by the best intentions in regard to social impulses, in regard to progressive social impulses of humanity, was murdered, as you know, in Paris, on the day on which this fatal world-war broke out. This man was Jaurès. Jaurès was unquestionably one of the most honest men of our time in the field of social endeavours; he was one of those who strove with all his intellectual powers after an insight into the present conditions of life. He tried to understand why they have become more and more absurd, why they produce in a growing measure pauperisation and desolation, both in the spiritual and in the material fields of human life. With all his might he endeavoured to find ideas and thoughts which could be transmitted to others, with the aim of discovering a solution of the great life-problems of the present time. We can learn a lot from characters such as Jaurès. If we study the shortcomings of the present from a spiritual-scientific standpoint, concerning which we must develop clear thoughts, we learn most of all by studying them in men whose upright character in particular, and whose honest striving after knowledge are unquestionable, men who possess certain gifts of insight, in keeping with the times. The ravages of our time can be understood far better if we study the life of the most respected and esteemed men, and not the life of men who do not enjoy so much respect, for the best possible motives, in the highest meaning, may be ascribed to such men. Men of this type, who dedicate all their thoughts, feelings and will-impulses to the welfare of humanity and place them at the service of aims that seek to raise humanity to a higher social level, men of the type of

*) See Vol. IV of "KOSMISCHE UND MENSCHLICHE GESCHICHTE": Goethe und die Krisis des 19. Jahrhunderts" (7th Lect.) Publ. by Phil. Anthropol. Publishing Co., Dornach, Switzerland.

Jaurès - and he is not an isolated case, for the best men of our time experience this difficulty - find it very hard to speak of such things as our spiritual science. Yet their aims on behalf of humanity can only be realised if they ~~xxxx~~ grasp the following truth; these highly gifted men can only give effect to their aims and to what they seek to realise, if they ~~xxxx~~ say to themselves: What I can reach with my ordinary intellectual powers, with the ordinary philosophical and scientific means, only gives rise to impulses that are far too weak to influence life; I must realise that when I follow my own paths, everything which I endeavour to transmit to others is without a foundation. My former beliefs must first be based on the deeper foundation of spiritual science. I must recognise spiritual facts and acknowledge the existence of real spiritual facts.

Those who do not admit these spiritual facts and develop all kinds of thoughts and ideas in connection with the progress of humanity, may be compared to a man looking at a garden full of plants that begin to show signs of decay. Indeed, modern humanity too reveals signs of decay! The man in question will observe his plants, do this or that, and he will try many things to redress the evil; in short, he will be busy all the time. Yet he will achieve nothing. Perhaps one plant may recover, but another one will decay still more, and on the whole his plants will not improve. Why not? Because there may be a disease infecting the roots, which he has failed to note.

This example applies to all the social endeavours of men like Jaurès. They may take infinite pains, and on the surface they may be doing excellent things, yet they do not penetrate as far as the root of the evil, for the evil gnawing at the roots of modern life is the failing to recognise a real spiritual world. Men may believe that they are setting up well-founded social truths, yet they will yield no fruit for the welfare of humanity unless they are based on the truths which can only be transmitted by a science of the spirit. Modern humanity can only progress in a real way if men acknowledge spiritual science - that part of spiritual science which the present most needs, namely the recognition of real spiritual beings and spiritual forces - and if spiritual science is no longer opposed, if particularly the best men of our time no longer oppose it. We should clearly realise that the best men of our time, those who are inspired by the best motives, encounter great difficulties in grasping the most essential part of spiritual science: the recognition of a real spiritual world.

In a lecture at Zurich I drew attention to one particular point which illustrates this clearly. I mentioned a man who spoke very benevolently of our spiritual science, and even published his words. Before a very cultivated public, he once had the courage to say that the aims pursued in our direction, in our spiritual movement, could no longer be considered as mere foolishness. Yet this man, too, had to come to a stop in the most important thing of all, the acknowledgement of the spiritual world. What does he say? He says all manner of things: -

"We should rather look upon this spiritual movement" (so he says), "or at least upon the circle around Steiner, as a religious movement among contemporaries, although its character is not in any way new or original, but syncretic. Nevertheless it directs its attention to the foundations of life as such, so that we can look upon it as a movement which satisfies man's supersensible interests, and consequently as a movement which transcends the realism that only adheres to sensory facts. Above all, we may look upon it as a movement which leads men to self-reflection in connection with the ethical problems that must be faced; we must look upon it as a movement which aims at inner re-birth, based upon a scrupulous self-education. It suffices to read Steiner's introductory book to Theosophy in order to see how earnestly he directs men to work upon themselves and to strive after a moral purification and a perfectioning of human nature."

In reading out these words to you I am not following any whim of mine, but I read them to you because we must clearly perceive the attitude of the world outside towards our endeavours. The man in question is well-disposed towards us, although he looks upon our movement as a "syncretic" one. He calls it "syncretic" because he does not know it, nor does he realise that it is a completely new and original movement, already in view of the fact that it is based upon something that has never existed before: upon the new natural-scientific direction, which is, after all, its true foundation. He can give no information whatever about this, for he does not understand it; yet he adopts a friendly attitude towards us. But if we now allow ourselves to be influenced by the whole lecture given by him on "The Conceptual World of Cultured Men", we realise that he undoubtedly reflected on the fact that modern men need a spiritual training, and he sees in our movement an attempt to further the general spiritual development of humanity. But then he says - and this is the characteristic point : -

"Its speculations, going in the direction of supersensible truths, are a reaction against materialism. But of course, through such speculations it easily loses the basis of reality and gets entangled in hypotheses, " ...

He thinks that genuine spiritual truths are hypotheses, and not real facts!

..."in clairvoyant fantasies, in a realm of dreams, so that no strength is left for the reality of individual facts and a social structure of life."

These were his actual words, although he afterwards added in a most friendly way:

"Nevertheless we must look upon Theosophy as a phenomenon tending to correct the present development of modern culture."

He is obliged to halt before all the things which cannot possibly be separated from our movement; he must halt before things

which we mention from the very outset, namely, before supersensible facts. Yet without a connection with supersensible facts (let us bear this in mind clearly) humanity cannot come out of the blind alley into which it has strayed. Whereas our movement in particular seeks the firm foundation required for the realisation of every social ideal, even well-disposed people believe that our movement leads men into a realm of dreams and that "there is no strength left" for a social structure of life! As stated, such words are dictated by a lack of confidence, a lack of confidence in recognising spiritual facts; inspired by an unconscious fear, by an unconscious lack of courage. This is complete lack of insight, or rather, lack of insight in regard to the aims of spiritual science, which seeks to give a sound foundation even to social endeavours.

Thus even men of Jaurès' type face life without being able to recognise, with the aid of thoughts acquired through education and through their contemporaries, that everything which takes place upon the physical plane is dependent on spiritual worlds, and that in the sphere in which we are called upon to influence life - for instance, in the social sphere - we can only act in the right way if we possess a knowledge of the spiritual laws through which the forces of the spiritual world can penetrate into the physical world. And just because these men do not possess this knowledge, just because this a symptom of the times, a widely-spread symptom characterising the best men of our time, the unconscious, but none the less significant lies of life penetrate into the present. Everywhere we can "catch" these lies of life; we can really "catch" them!

A man confronts the others, a man who wished to better the conditions of human life with all the means available to his social knowledge, for he justly recognised that these conditions were leading mankind into a blind alley. A man confronts the others, a man who really studied the facts of history, in order to obtain an insight into the social sphere; he studied the history of past epochs, and from the facts of the past he wished to learn what could be done for the welfare of his contemporaries; he studied the mistakes of the past, of past social endeavours, so that similar mistakes might in future be avoided. But in all his strivings even Jaurès was quite unable to recognise the existence of a spiritual world, and to acknowledge the truth that continual streams of spiritual life flow down into this world through human beings.

There is a fine essay written by Jaurès on the connections between socialism and patriotism, an essay written in a truly Jaurès-like spirit. Jaurès tried to show how historical events influence human evolution and how they are active in the development of humanity. After having contemplated various influences in the Roman Empire, hoping that they might teach him how to face the problems of the present, after having placed many things before his soul with an extraordinarily conscientious striving after knowledge, he also dealt with a chapter of modern history. Jaurès' book contains a strange chapter on the subject of the proletariat and patriotism, and it is interesting to bear it in mind, for this short chapter

shows us what really takes place in the souls of our best contemporaries.

Jaurès says: "Even the admirable national movement of landed property" . . . but it is not necessary to discuss details, for the essential thing is to show that industry and so forth, and not landed property, play the chief part in the progress of modern social life. We shall not discuss these details, for the essential thing to bear in mind is that Jaurès feels compelled to draw attention to Joan of Arc, to the Maid of Orleans. Now imagine a man completely immersed in the ideas of the present, drawing attention to the Maid of Orleans! Everyone who is acquainted with modern history also knows that she influenced the development of modern humanity in such a way (all who recognise this fact objectively must admit that the Maid of Orleans really exercised this great influence) that the present map of Europe would have an entirely different aspect had the Maid of Orleans not influenced the development of modern times. Jaurès, of course, admits this. He writes: -

"Joan of Arc fulfils her mission and sacrifices herself for her country's welfare, in a France in which landed property no longer constituted the only power, for the communities were already beginning to play an important part and Louis the Saint had already sanctioned the craftsmen's guilds by a solemn proclamation. During the revolutions under Charles Quinze and Charles Seize, the bourgeois merchants and the craftsmen's guilds came to the fore as new powers, and the most clear-sighted of those who wished to reform the realm, dreamed of a league between citizens and peasants against a lawless and arbitrary rule, in a modern France, that was soon to be governed by the "Roi Bourgeois", the son of that poor king whom Joan of Arc was about to save, in that cultured and refined country which was moved by the sorrows of Charles d'Orleans, whose imprisonment touched the heart of staunch Lorraine. In this setting, which was anything but rustic, appeared Joan of Arc."

"She was a simple country maid, who had seen the sufferings of the peasants around her. Yet she saw in these sufferings only an example of the great and lofty sufferings borne by the plundered and invaded kingdom. No particular place and no landed property play any role whatever in her soul; her glance travels beyond the fields of Lorraine. Her peasant-heart is greater than her peasantry. It beats for the valiant, distant cities besieged by the stranger. To live in the country, does not necessarily imply a limitation to agricultural problems. Undoubtedly Joan's dream would not have been so free, so daring and encompassing had she lived in a noisy city. Loneliness protected her daring of thought, and she could thus experience far more strongly the great patriotic community, for her fantasy could fill a calm horizon with sufferings and hopes that transcended that horizon. She was not filled by the spirit of peasant-rebellion, but she wished to free a great France, in order to consecrate it afterwards to the service of God, to Christianity and to righteousness. She believed that her aim was ~~xx~~ high and righteous, and

in order to reach it, she even has the courage to defy the Church and to plead a revelation that stands above every other."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

ADDRESS BY ALBERT STEFFEN

AT THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY,

6TH OF APRIL, 1941.

I open this year's Annual General Meeting in the name of the General Anthroposophical Society, and extend to you all a cordial welcome. Let us begin, as always, with a retrospective survey of the past year. It was a very difficult one, yet great forces of sacrifice have also been at work. This can for instance be seen in the figures which Dr. Wachsmuth will read out to you when I have finished my address. These figures express certain spiritual facts.

First of all, let me mention the books published this year by Frau Marie Steiner. Four books by Rudolf Steiner and Hamerling's play, "Danton and Robespierre", were published for the general public. Then there are eleven publications for the members of our Society. I cannot mention each book separately, nor refer to their content. They constitute the fundamental stock and are the tools of all those who are active in Rudolf Steiner's spirit. Each book conceals a living Being that can be reached through inner practice. The peculiar quality of Rudolf Steiner's books is that they gain in interest the more we work with them. Just the opposite is the case with other books. Rudolf Steiner's books are our armour. If we wear it rightly, it will shine more and more and reveal the Being that lives in it, the Spirit for whose sake Rudolf Steiner sacrificed his life. The books contain extraordinary lectures, but you will surely know this! For instance: "Occult Psychology", "The Mysteries of the Sun and of the Threefold Human Being", "The Sway of Cosmic Reason in the Origin of Speech", etc. Before we can, to a certain extent, make these truths our own, we shall have to live with them for a long time. Then there are some new editions: "The Story of My Life", "The Gospel of St. John", "The Occult Foundations of the Bhagavad Gita", and others. Twenty books in all. More than can be published to-day by a great Publishing Company. This bears witness to the living force of Rudolf Steiner's work. Then we must add the books published with Frau Dr. Steiner's consent by the Section for the Arts of Speech and Music: Rudolf Steiner's early essays dealing with theatrical subjects, with acting and critique in a positive sense; descriptions of Goethe's activity as a natural-scientific investigator and aesthete, essays on Nietzsche, Burckhardt, etc. These essays are most important for those who are active in literary fields, for they contain fundamental truths for the future, although they deal with subjects of past decades. They express the thought that works of art should never be judged according to old principles, but that every work of

PS. The titles of the books are the English translations of the German originals. The books are published in German.